

**Idaho's Strategic
Action Plan
For
Invasive Species**

Executive Summary

October 2004

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Meeting the growing challenge posed by invasive species in Idaho will require carefully crafted, coordinated and well funded actions that will augment those programs already in place. This strategic action plan includes 22 separate proposals, which, if implemented, should help prevent the invasions of new species in Idaho and control the spread of those that are already here. It is not intended to either supplant current efforts nor to add another managerial level to them. Rather, the actions proposed in it will focus on the areas in which all invasives species efforts have in common and thereby benefit each, whether for the control of noxious weeds, the prevention of aquatic organisms that would harm fish or recreation, insects or fungi that attack our trees or the host of animal and plant diseases. Among these commonalities are the management of invasion pathways, adequate funding, control of existing invasions and educational efforts to help the public understand their stake in the prevention and control of unwanted species.

For many people, the term “invasive species”, by itself, may not raise particularly frightening images. After all, purple loosestrife is an attractive plant growing along the edge of wet areas. West Nile virus is something that one reads about in the paper and which mostly affects horses without making anyone’s friend or neighbors deathly ill. Most insects are simple nuisances and weeds are something to be sprayed if they appear in your yard. Here, in Idaho, even with our outdoor, often rural lifestyle, for most there is no consistently negative image arising from either the term or from the tangible effects of most species that we would rather not have.

In the broadest sense, invasive species include those species purposefully or inadvertently brought here and which exhibit “invasive” characteristics. This excludes the multitude of introduced species that have great value. Rather “invasive species” escape their original or intended ecological niche to habitats where a species can then grow uncontrollably. Once there, they cause harm, whether to Idaho’s economy, to human health, or to our natural world, and include:

- Pests that threaten various agricultural commodities;
- Forest pests including those that may attack commercially valuable timber species and those that threaten shade trees found mostly in urban settings;
- Diseases that threaten the health of humans or domestic animals and wildlife;
- Exotic animal species;
- Noxious weeds which displace ecologically or economically valuable native species or agricultural crops and those that threaten the integrity of streams and lakes.

Current Efforts

Over the years, our state, like all others, has enacted a number of statutes and created programs designed to prevent and manage a wide variety of invasive species. Often, these programs are administered in cooperation with various federal agency partners and range from monitoring plant pests to veterinary inspections for communicable animal diseases to the tracking of weed species, along with parallel efforts to control those

unwanted species that do arrive in our state. The agencies involved in this important work include the Idaho Departments of Agriculture, Transportation and Fish and Game, and Lands, along with the federal Animal, Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS). In addition, the University of Idaho's colleges of Agriculture, Natural Resources and the Cooperative Extension Service play important research and educational roles. Finally, local governments, industries and their associations and individuals work cooperatively in control and educational efforts, often coming together in successful efforts as the "cooperative weed management areas" or the "Weed Awareness Campaign". All told, current invasive species management in Idaho costs in excess of \$10 million, in a mix of state funds, property tax assessments, industry fees and federal agency contributions.

One might legitimately ask why, given the state's significant efforts so far, is there a need for a comprehensive strategic action plan. Idaho's programs have been likened to a "patchwork quilt", where each "patch" represents an individual program or effort. So long as the patches connect, the quilt is useful, but if they do not, then there are gaps in the coverage through which undesirable species can enter. The extent to which Idaho's efforts have gaps and how they might be filled is the substance of this strategic plan.

Idaho's Strategic Plan

This strategic plan is based upon, (1) the findings of the statewide assessment of invasive species management in Idaho, completed in 2003, (2) recommendations of the Governor's "Invasive Species Summit" held early in 2004, (3) the efforts of four separate working groups made up of invasive species professionals, and, (4) consideration of successful programs in other states, plus actions undertaken by the federal government, largely through the national invasive species plan. Developed under the direction of the Idaho Invasive Species Council, the 22 individual proposals in the plan address:

- Early Intervention – Prevention, Early Detection, & Rapid Response
- Containment, Control and Restoration
- Reaching Important Audiences through Education and Training
- Broadening Knowledge through Research and Technology Transfer
- Assuring Adequate Funding
- Creating an Adequate, Effective Legal Structure
- Coordinating Our Efforts

The plan includes a specific long term goal—a desired condition to be achieved within the next decade for each of the above areas. Every proposal has a short term, measurable objective, a specific timeline for implementation and each seems to be achievable within the state's fiscal and political climate. As noted previously, each is designed to enhance the ability of managers of existing programs to do their jobs better, more easily and in coordination with other existing efforts. For example, one proposal would train DEQ's stream survey teams to recognize and report possible new invasions of weeds or aquatic pests found within the stream or riparian area. If implemented, then this would increase field surveillance by approximately 30 trained people who spend all summer in the field. Their efforts would markedly improve our ability to detect and report new weed, aquatic

nuisance and possibly other species of note as they travel the state and complete their stream surveys.

Although each proposal is significant, there is one upon which much of the success of the others rests. The plan calls for a statewide invasive species coordinator who will be an advocate for the broad spectrum of actions to prevent, detect and control all invasive species and will help coordinate the mix of local, state and federal programs targeted to this work. In meeting these objectives, the coordinator will work closely with and act as the “staff executive” for the Invasive Species Council and will have these responsibilities.

- With the Council, set program priorities, develop a work plan, assign accountability, set a budget, and report activities;
- Represent and report to the Governor on invasive species matters;
- Compete for federal and private grants to implement the state’s action plan;
- Provide information regarding invasive species and the state’s plan to the Legislature, Congressional delegation and stakeholders;
- Work with the Council to implement plan recommendations such as:
- Identifying key audiences and educational efforts directed to these audiences;
- Developing proposals to assure that detection, rapid response and emergency powers are sufficient to address a broad array of invasive species and invasion pathways;
- Working with the University of Idaho, USDA and other partners to identify new and potential invaders, assess risk, and respond rapidly. Using this information as a basis to structure regulatory actions or to help set program priorities;
- Establishing a single statewide point of contact and a clearinghouse for reporting new or spreading invasive species and for disseminating information about them;
- Cooperating with program managers to identify educational or other opportunities which can best be implemented as joint efforts.

This strategic action plan responds to the clear message from the Invasive Species Summit—we are not doing enough to prevent new invasions of unwanted species nor to control the spread of those that are here now. The proposals in the plan as outlined in the following table will help fill the gaps in existing programs and make them more effective, as well as giving the Invasive Species Council responsibility for setting priorities and speaking with one voice for the entire invasive species community. It is a plan that is essential if we are to meet the growing challenge that unwanted and invasive species pose to our state.

| Summary of Proposals and Implementation Actions | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
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| Individual Tasks | Actions Needed to Implement | 2005 | | | | 2006 | | | | 2007 | | | | 2008 | | | | 2009 | | | | | |
| <i>Technical Modifications to Existing Programs</i> | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | | |
| Task 1—Set priorities for control work by risk assessments and by defining “clean” areas of the state | Collaborative effort between researchers and program administrators | | | | | ● | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Task 2—Develop programmatic NEPA analyses and decisions to speed control and eradication for federal projects and for federal lands. | Federal agency actions | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | ● | | |
| Task 3—Develop lists of unwanted and high risk species that should trigger rapid responses | Collaborative effort between researchers and program administrators | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | ● | | | | | | | |
| Task 4—Develop a statewide system for early detection of suspect species, rapid assessment of their potential risks and responses commensurate with those risks. | The sum of actions for tasks 1 and 3. | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | ● | | | | | |
| Task 5—Create a single point of contact for reporting new or spreading species or obtaining information about various species. | Collaborative effort between program managers plus funding | | | | ● | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Task 6—Increase surveillance of invasion pathways | Training of those who interact with invasion pathways; Direction from managers | | | | | | | | ● | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| <i>Education, Training and Technology Transfer</i> | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Task 1—Identify specific key audiences and create the communications tools to reach them. | Collaborative effort between communicators and program managers | | | | | | | | | | | | ● | | | | | | | | | | |
| Task 2—Cross-train agency and industry personnel to recognize and report possible invasions. | Collaborative effort between program managers | | | | | ● | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Task 3—Measure progress in reaching intended audiences and in building public support for preventing the introduction or spread of invasive species through regular public opinion polling. | Communicators should explore opportunities for benchmark polling | | | | ● | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Task 4—Identify and set priorities for research needs. | Collaborative effort between program managers and researchers | | | | ● | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Task 5—Begin applying what we know and continuing education effort to three immediate invasive species needs, including detecting and mapping new or spreading invasions, risk assessments and restoring sites infested with invasive plant species. | Collaborative effort between research, extension specialists and program managers | | | | | | | | ● | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Task 6—Develop needed education and training materials that will support the proposals outlined in the “education and training” provisions of this plan. | Collaborative effort between communicators, extension specialists and program managers | | | | ● | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

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